

mental and wasteful as on the use of that instrument by men of the Hardie type As against slogans, of any kind, Webb re-acted, naturally, he re-acted with particular emphasis at this stage, when to his native belief in administration was added the discovery of himself as an eminent success in the administrative role Moreover who knew the Trade Unions, if not he? He thought, and justly, between 1893 and 1901, that they were at best lukewarm, and only accepted the Labour Representation Committee out of weariness with the persistency of Hardie Since, therefore, little or nothing actual was going to come of it, the whole thing was showy, premature and rather futile This is the note that sounds in his polemical journalism, at this time, and for some years after It seemed justified by many facts

At the turn of the century, political interest, generally, was at a low ebb Of the rate of progress of Socialist propaganda in middle-class circles, the membership of the Fabian Society afforded a thermometer one at which the Webbs naturally looked It rose, steadily, if slowly, up to 1899 from that point it proceeded to decline Part indeed, of the sheer heroism of Keir Hardie's effort lies in the fact that he carried it on, with tireless faith and unbreakable resolution, during a period of dull reaction so far as Socialist propaganda, and even so far as advanced Liberalism, was concerned He won a formal success, partly because people were sick of his persistence Then

he and MacDonald turned that purely formal
success into
a real one, and did it at a time when everything
was against
them when the outbreak of the war suspended
ordinary
political action, cut across the old political
lines and pro-
duced deep internal division, even within the
slender
Socialist ranks

Here, of course, we come to the major
explanation of the
attitude taken by the Webbs at this stage.
On October